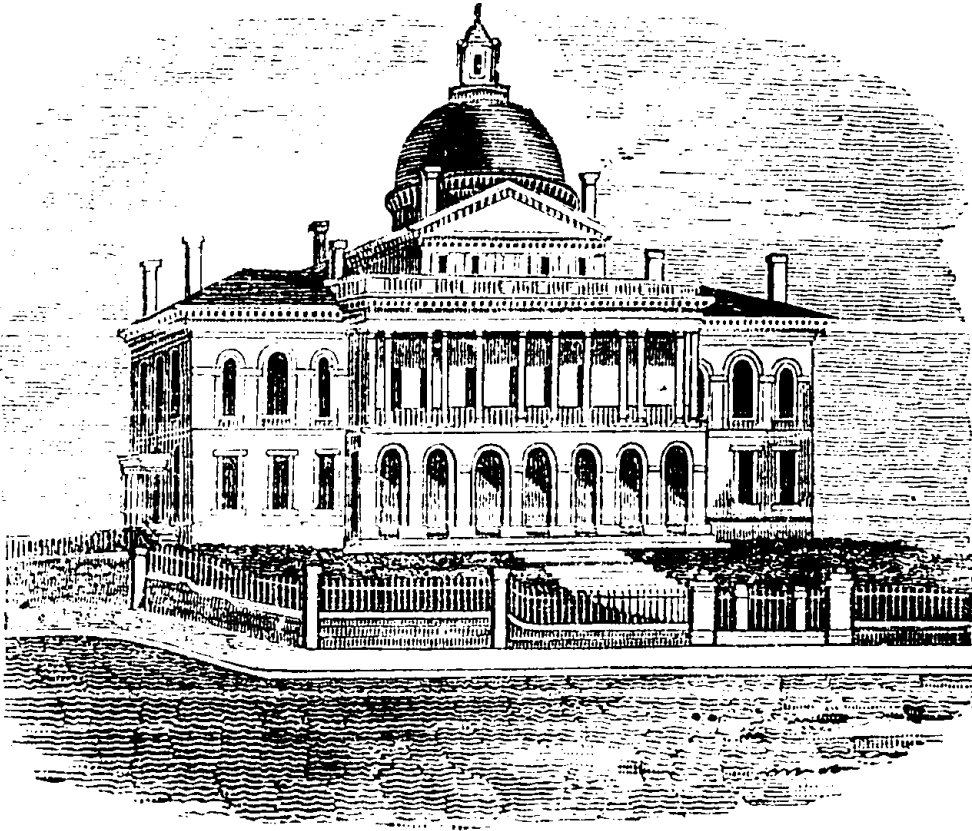


# HISTORY OF BOSTON.



BY ROBIN CARVER.

BOSTON :

LILLY, WAIT, COLMAN, AND HOLDEN.

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## CHAPTER VII.

*Fleet at Nantasket. Violence of Commodore Knowles. Alarm of the people. Mobs. Magistrate in the stocks. Burning the barge. Governor retires to the Castle. Measures of the council. Town meeting. Issue of the affair. Town house.*

1. I shall now pass over a number of years, during which there was no event of particular interest, and shall tell you a story which happened in 1747. It will show you the spirit and independence of Bostonians in the old times. This spirit finally led to the American Revolution.

2. In the harbor of Nantasket, there was an English fleet, under the command of Commodore Knowles. Some of his sailors had been silly enough to go on shore, and, finding they could amuse themselves a while, determined not to return to the ship. The commodore was anxious to sail, and resolved to procure men in the place of those who had deserted, wherever he could find them.

3. His boats were accordingly sent up to Boston, early

in the morning, manned with sailors and officers, who were commanded to seize a sufficient number of men to fill up their crews. They first surprised all the seamen they found in the vessels in the harbor. Afterwards they went on the wharves, and carried away several apprentices, and laboring men, who had business and families on shore, and had never been to sea.

4. The people were soon alarmed at this outrage, and collected in large numbers. The whole town was in an uproar. Mobs collected, armed with pitch-mops, sticks, and clubs, and soon became large and powerful. Having heard that several of the commanders of the fleet were at the house of Governor Shirley, they immediately proceeded thither with a great noise and shouts.

5. The house was soon surrounded, and the front and back yards were completely filled with the enraged populace. By the exertions of some men of influence, they were prevented from breaking through the doors and windows, and carrying their violence to extremity. A poor magistrate of the king exposed himself in the midst of them, in a vain attempt to exercise his authority; the mob laid hands upon him in no very gentle manner, and hurried him away in triumph to the public stocks. Here they placed him, and amused themselves with him till dinner time.

6. Even the anger of the mob yields to the call of appetite. The leaders and the followers were both willing to satisfy their hunger, before completing their revenge. They

separated at the usual hour for dining, and the town once more became quiet. Putting by their pitch-mops and clubs, they busied themselves with knives and forks, in a much more harmless and agreeable manner.

7. About dusk, however, they began to assemble again in great numbers. Several thousand people were collected in King street, now State street, below the old Town House. Becoming turbulent and excited, they vented their rage by throwing stones and brickbats, through the windows of the council chamber.

8. The governor, however, ventured to appear in the balcony, with several gentlemen and members of the council. It was some time before the mob would consent to listen to him. At length silence was obtained, and the governor made an address. He told the people that he disapproved of the violent measures of the commodore, and promised to procure a release of the citizens who had been seized.

9. It is in vain to reason with an enraged mob, and the governor found that he had made a long speech to no purpose. Nothing would satisfy the leaders but the seizure and imprisonment of all the officers of the fleet, who were in town. It was now thought necessary for the governor to leave the council, and he retired to his own house.

10. The mob next proceeded to a wharf, where they found a barge, which they supposed to belong to the fleet. They immediately seized it, and dragged it through the streets, as far as the house of the governor. They had

made preparations to burn it, but fear of setting the town on fire induced them to remove to a less dangerous place.

11. On the next day, the governor ordered the military companies of Boston to appear under arms, and keep watch through the night. They refused, and the governor removed to the castle in the harbor. He then wrote to Commodore Knowles, and told him of the confusion and alarm that had been excited by his violence. The commodore, however, declined listening to any accommodation, till the officers on shore were suffered to return to the fleet. He even threatened to bring up his ships, and bombard the town.

12. The council and representatives of the colony were unwilling to interfere in this affair. Notwithstanding the danger of allowing the people to take the law, by violence, into their own hands, they were also fearful, that any countenance of the violent measures of the navy would lead to a repetition of them. In the course of two or three days, however, they began to change their opinions. The governor had behaved with proper feeling during the whole transaction, and they thought he should not remain without support.

13. The council passed a vote, by which they ordered that the officers of the fleet should be forthwith set at liberty. In the afternoon, a meeting of the inhabitants was held. At this meeting, they expressed their deep sense of the insult and injury that had been offered to them, by the seizure

of their fellow-citizens. They also condemned the riotous conduct of those, who had insulted the governor and council, and committed many other acts of violence.

14. On the following day, the commodore released the men whom he had impressed, and the squadron sailed, to the great joy of the town. The militia turned out in large numbers, with much parade, and escorted the governor to his house. Such was the conclusion of one of the first acts of violence, which excited the Bostonians to a similar violent resistance.

15. In the course of this same year, the old Town House was nearly destroyed by fire. Nothing was left standing but the walls. It was repaired in the following year, and notwithstanding it has again suffered from fire, within a few years, its outward appearance still remains nearly the same.